

DRAFT- 25 February 2014

History of Thall Scouts

Major Aamir Cheema , {retired} Master of Letters, War Studies, Glasgow.

aamircheema@outlook.com 0302-5478100

Thall Scouts - 1949-2014

Thall Scouts were raised on 1st April 1949 at Thall Fort¹, it was the first scout's corps to be raised after independence and as such enjoys a unique position among the Frontier Corps. There was already a wing strength comprising of Tochi Scouts deployed at Thall Fort which was stationed since March 1948; mainly to protect the line of communication between the Kurram Valley and Tochi Valley, it was boosted with a company strength from South Waziristan Scouts and elevated to the status of a one wing corps mainly to act as reserve to Inspector General Frontier Corps. Major Sanaullah of SWS was the founding father along with Hujam Khan Mohmand who was the first subedar major of Thall Scouts. In 1952, Thall Scouts moved to Fort Salop in Khyber Agency and returned back to Thall in July 1965; reason being that in 1952 the army itself again occupied Thall Fort. Thall Scouts took active part in both Indo-Pakistan Wars of 1965 and 1971. It was in 1981 when the Thall Scouts were elevated to three wing composition when newly raised Kohistan Scouts stationed at Spinwam were amalgamated into the Thall Scouts along with raising of one more wing to give necessary manpower; Lieutenant Colonel Sardar Khan was the first commandant. In 1983 a medium battery of Mahsud Scouts was incorporated into the Thall Scouts and fourth wing was added in 1999 with the command structure raised in 1990 to have a colonel in command; Colonel Nusrat Abbas was the first commandant. It was in 2013 that Spinwam Fort and area was handed over back to Tochi Scouts. Thall Scouts is actively participating in the ongoing war against militancy, all in all over 103 Thall Scouts have laid down their lives in the course of duty since inception. Thall scouts have participated apart from the wars in almost all major operations of Frontier corps ranging from Kalat, Bajaur, Zhob, Darra Adam Khel, Darel Valley, Orakzai, Kurram, North & South Waziristan to Force Command Northern Areas.

On raising the strength was 16 platoons comprising of Yousafzai, Khattak, Turi, Orakzai and Afridi tribes, in 1961, two platoons of Orakzai were transferred to newly raised Bajaur scouts thereby reducing the strength to 14 platoons, in July 1969 the strength was reduced to 13 platoons mainly due to amalgamation of one Khattak platoon with headquarter company and raising of pioneer platoon. In 1973, one platoon of Orakzai was transferred to newly raised Mohmand Rifles; **presently corps have 44 platoons of nine tribes.**

Thall Fort

The original fort was rebuilt in 1905 and had a native infantry and cavalry detachment under a British officer²; Thall was under command Kohat Brigade.

Present day Thall Fort was constructed after the Third Afghan War 1919, during this war the Afghan army under General Nadir were able to reach the Thall without any opposition through the Kaitu River which flows south west of Thall, the city itself was looted

¹ Vide Telegram No.708 of Ministry of States & Foreign Regions, Karachi dated 17th February 1949.

² Imperial Gazetteer Provincial series North West Frontier Province, 1905, pp. 179-182.

and plundered for almost a week³. In 1921 the fort was initially raised as a mud fortified, it was in 1935 that present construction took place which lasted for well over six years; it was part of a series of forts which British constructed to counter the Afghan threat and included Razmak garrison also. Thall Fort is on a relative height, in a rectangular pattern with high walls and having four piquet also, all in first & second quadrant with Kurram River covering the western approach. Without any doubt this is the most grand of all the forts constructed by British in 20th century along the Durand Line; one unique aspect of the Thall Fort is the railway line which terminates inside the fort linking it with Kohat through a narrow gauge line. Before going any further few words about the railway line are necessary. Kohat was linked with the rest of the country through railway link in 1902 and after two years the Thall was also linked with Kohat with a narrow gauge railways. There was a railway service on alternate days, the journey time was five hours thus it necessitated the parking of railway inside the fort in case of any breakdown. The railway station itself was adjacent to the southern wall of the fort, there were three main classes of railway carriage, the first, second and third class⁴. This service remained in vogue till 1985 when it was abandoned mainly due to financial reasons, unlike Khyber safari it was never revived and presently the railway station is being used to house the Christian community of the Thall Fort. Before the construction of the railway line the usual mode of transport from Kohat towards Thall onwards to Parachinar was bullock cart,

‘ of the many villainous works that have left the hands of man, the Thall road is probably the most vile...some specially industrious Royal Engineer had apparently been amusing himself by scattering a few bags of pebbles along his beat...the last stage of that road, it was a stumbling-block to many, after sticking in a dry torrent bed and being nearly drowned in a full one, we arrived at Gandiar , a police post six miles from Thall ’⁵.

There are strong evidences which suggests that present fort is constructed on the same site which was utilised by the British army as staging post during its advance in Second Afghan War of 1878-1879.

In the early days of 20th century, rail and mud fort were the two main symbols of the British Raj, Thall was the last outpost of the settled areas, an enterprising and thriving frontier town. Initially the railway station was within the stone throw of the mud fort, it was only after expansion of 1935 that it virtually came inside the fort. The construction material for the fort all came on railways so was the mail. There were no British troops ahead of Thall thus volume of passengers were mainly traders or natives going to Kohat, for the troops stationed at Thall Fort itself; it was a blessing. Another landmark of yesteryears is the ‘Cocktail Lounge’ which is presently under use of district administration, it is situated few hundred yards away from the Fort and was constructed in 1921. It is a small bastion, probably the mud fort of 1905 was upgraded into cemented rectangular with high walls with two bungalows inside. Expanding or modification of a fort on frontier is a delicate work of art

³ Major Muhammad Nawaz The Guardians of Frontier , Frontier Corps, 1996, p-297.

⁴ Imperial Gazetteer Provincial series North West Frontier Province, 1905, pp.54-55.

⁵ Captain Charles Gray Robertson, Kurram, Kabul & Kandahar, being a brief record of impressions in Three Campaigns under General Roberts, reprinted by Sang-e-Meel , Lahore, 1979. Pp-70-79.

and diplomacy, when the original structure was raised in 1880, the 1905 modification simply expanded it without exposing the troops to hostile fire. After 1921, a new mud fort was raised as the old one was practically razed to ground by the Afghans and was vacated by the holding troops. In 1931 the new structure was functional and opening ceremony was performed by the general officer commanding Kohat Division, a tree was planted by him on the occasion which has flourished in all these years and is still intact in front lawn of the Thall Scouts Mess.

Fort before expansion is almost a replica of Boya Fort and after expansion is similar in design and layout to Shagai Fort which was also constructed in 1935. It is hexagonal in shape with over twenty feet high thick walls encompassing almost two cricket grounds. Troops barracks are along the inner of the wall with firing points and bays after every three feet, water supply is through tube wells inside the fort, another key feature is in hygiene which have covered underground sewerage drains flowing out to the River Kurram down below. Five watch towers which are like small citadels acted as the sentry observation posts. Unlike Khyber Agency where all the forts are in visual contact with each other, Thall Fort stands alone, thus it was constructed on a much grand scale. Surprisingly there are no old graves of British or native troops visible in Thall Fort vicinity as the case is in Drosh Fort.

Thall Fort was designed by a French architect, 'boundary wall made of bricks which are 16 feet high and one and half feet wide....western portion has an underground cellar which can accommodate hundred men, this is connected through a tunnel six feet dial with outside world'⁶. Fort's importance lies in its location, it is 90 kilometres short of Parachinar which is in north, Kohat is 100 kilometres in south.

Thall city itself is situated at an elevation of 2620 feet, it was the most flourishing town at the turn of 20th Century, climate is hot in summers and cold in winter, average rainfall is 200mm annually that extends from July-September. Cultivation is mainly along the beds of River Kurram and chief crops are wheat, maize, sugarcane and seasonal vegetables. Inhabitants of Thall are known as Thalwals⁷ who are a sub section of Sunni Bangash consisting of Yousaf Khel, Khadirzai, Druplaris, Parachas, Mehta Khel and Namzani. During construction of the fort, people came from far distance and paracha is one such example who are Punjabi but settled here for last hundred years. Bangash is the main tribe which is divided into Shia and Sunni factions, other major tribes bordering Thall includes Turi, Orakzai, Zaimukhut, Baland Khel, Wazir and Dara Baraks. Thalwals are a colourful characters, their Eid celebration are quite different from other areas, most notable is the 'Egg Breaking' in which boiled coloured eggs are placed on the ground and game is to break it with another boiled egg, which is thrown from a distance, one who is able to break the egg wins otherwise he loses his egg.⁸ Marriage ceremonies are also bit different and depends upon the individual tribe or clan; however early marriages are common, bridegroom has to pay for the wedding expenses. Turban wearing is not common, only few wear it and colour is important, unlike

⁶ Colonel Syed Shahadat Hussain, *Thall Fort, its strategic importance. Defence Journal Quarterly Pakistan, January-February, 1985*, pp23-27.

⁷ Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans*, Macmillan & Company, London, 1958, P-21.

⁸ Thall Scouts, *History Brief*, 1998, p-5.

Wazir who prefers black, the Bangash prefers white, orange & yellow. Thall was famous as a wood market, other than that no specific industry exists, another key feature of the area is the absence of drugs, Hashish or opium is neither cultivated here nor it is sold as is the case in Tirah or in Dara Adam Khel which is famous for weapon making

Raising

The initial organisation was four companies which formed a wing and one corps headquarters which controlled this wing. On raising the strength was 899 all ranks including four officers, 25 junior commissioned officers and 870 other ranks including 66 non-combatants, it was organised into four companies known as No.1,2,3 & 4 company later these companies were known as A,B, C & D companies. Each company had four platoons, company had a strength of 208 all ranks including six junior commissioned officers commanded by a subedar. No.1 Company had Barak Khattak, Adam Khel Afridi, Orakzai Sunni and Yousafzai troops. No.2 Company had Seni Khattak, Saghri Khattak, Turi and Aka Khel platoons. No.3 Company comprised of Adam Khel & Kuki Khel Afridi, Barak Khattak and Orakzai sunni where as No.4 Company had Kamar Khel Afridi, Yousafzai, Saghri Khattak and Turi platoons. Among these tribes Adam Khel, Orakzai sunni, Aka Khel, Turi and Kamar Khel were regarded as trans-frontier while rest were treated as cis-frontier. Over all there were 28 junior commissioned and 97 non-commissioned officers in the Thall scouts. . Each company had four platoons comprising of three sections each, platoons were commanded by jemadar { naib subedar}. Apart from these four companies there was one headquarters company also, it comprises of 4 JCOs, 17 NCOs and 70 other ranks. Headquarters company mainly comprised of specialists including education, wireless, signal, 3 inch mortar , medium machine gun to name few. The non-combatants were grouped into ‘S ‘ Company, there were 16 cooks, 15 sweepers, 13 bhishtis, tailor, carpenter, mocha, mali, carpenter which were part of it apart from three religious teachers however there was no provision of any medical staff and only four drivers were authorised to the Thall Scouts. Clerical staff comprised of eight civilian and equal number of soldier clerks. The four officers authorised to the corps were distributed with one acting as commandant, one as adjutant & quartermaster and two officers for the wing. It is quite obvious that Wing was given an independent identity with the Corps headquarters keeping a distance, all orders or instructions were passed from the corps headquarters to the wing in written despite working under the same roof. Thall Scouts were primarily raised as a quick reaction force to look after the extreme ends of the Kurram and North Waziristan agency, it was unlike other Frontier Corps outfits not under any political agent rather directly under command IGFC.

Dress was, Mazri Shirt {not Bush Shirt}Khakki drill trousers/shorts, chapplis and peak cap. Stockings, hosetops & socks to be worn with shorts. In winter, jersey, plusfour or trousers of Scouts Serge, socks/stockings and chapplis. Cavalry twill, corduroy or whip cord were not allowed, however regimental swagger canes were allowed to be carried by officers.

Recruitment of recruits was the responsibility of the adjutant and no recruitment was allowed due to financial rules before 1st April, Thall Scouts adopted the policy of recruiting in small batches rather than one or two large batches, usual pattern was to send the recruiting parties. Men also used to bring their relatives or from their own qaum for the said purpose, extra care was taken in ensuring that potential recruit is not a deserter or already serving in any other unit. There were certain classes which were barred from recruitment including pirs, syeds, mullahs and qureshis⁹. Kamin class was also not enlisted in combatant category and it included artisans and menials such as potters, dyers, goldsmiths, blacksmith, carpenters and barbers, mirasis were however were allowed to be recruited in dhol & surnai band only. Recruits other than those selected were also paid the return railway fare, subsistence allowance and tonga hire charges only in case if the distance involved is more than 10 miles otherwise these recruits were expected to walk it out. Those recruits who were selected but were obvious that they will not make good soldiers were generally weeded out within three months. All those soldiers desirous of discharge were allowed to do so within three years of service, initially any soldier wishing to discharge was bound to pay rupees 30 in case he had one year of service, rupees 20 for two years of service and rupees ten for having three years of service. NCOs were allowed to go on pension after 18 years of service and JCOs after 21 years of service whereas sepoy was allowed to proceed on pension after fifteen years of service.

Training was the responsibility of the wing commander whereas adjutant assisted him in this by running cadres for senior sepoys, and drill umedwars. Training year commenced on 1st April every year, the first six months were set aside for the individual training and remaining part was utilised for the field firing, section, platoon and company training. Duration of recruits training was 24 weeks with a standardised training programme which was published separately and issued to all concerned. Map reading was an interesting aspect of training and one of the most vital, it was stressed that only standard names of places will be used and in case there is no name given to a place on map then Pashtu name can be used and written on map which then became a standard reference. In drill also the words of command were in Pashtu, for instance, arrow head formation was known as ‘Tir Shakal’, File formation as ‘Dawa Qatar Shakal’, open file formation as ‘Azad Dawa Qatar’, and extended line formation as ‘Azad Saf Shakal’. Night training was an integral part and was imparted from the very first day of recruit induction ‘simple exercises within the fort camp will be carried out by recruits from time to time in order to teach silence and silent movement...rubber soled chapplies will be used’.¹⁰

Gasht is an integral part of Frontier Corps way of life, in fact both have become synonym with each other, Thall scouts also laid great stress upon this aspect; gasht is different from patrolling although on surface both looks similar. Minimum of eight gashts were required from each post every month, a gasht book was maintained, and khassadar posts were generally avoided while on gasht however in case an officer is with gasht, he was encouraged to visit these khassadar posts. These khassadar only accompanied the gasht when

⁹ Thall Scouts Standing Orders 1955, page 55.

¹⁰ Thall Scouts standing orders, 1955, p-64.

there was a chance of collision with hostile villages, the standard authorisation of ammunition was 50 rounds on gasht. Khoedad Khel wazir who occupy the area north of Thall always resented the gashting of Thall scouts ' it is perhaps wiser to insist on our rights over another stony mile or so as they have neither shown nor given any trouble for quite a long time' remarks the commandant in 1954. Thall Scouts main responsibility was to keep the line of communication open on Thall-Spinwam road thus all gashts were carried out in this particular area. Road protection was not the responsibility of Thall Scouts as the picquetting between Hangu-Thall was carried out by the Frontier Constabulary and by Kurram Militia on Thall-Parachinar road and by North Waziristan Khassadars between Thall-Mirali .

Discipline was strict, it was and still is strict in all FC corps thus Thall Scouts were no exception, and taking of loan from contractors was a serious breach of discipline and so was driving of vehicles by officers.

Fort Salop 1954-1965

Thall Scouts for almost eleven years were out of Thall Fort, they were stationed at Fort Salop, almost all drafts of Thall Scouts history and even the official account of Frontier Corps writes that Thall Scouts came back to Thall Fort in 1954 but it is not correct. On 20th February 2014, Major Kalim the adjutant opened few sealed letters in his safe and among them were two letters from Eastern Federal Insurance, Karachi , addressed to Commandant Thall Scouts, Fort Salop dated July 1962 regarding the newly acquired fire insurance premium. Another evidence is in the form of a plaque which is almost hidden on the exit gate or the southern gate of Fort, where two dates are engraved one when the Thall Scouts vacated the fort i.e 1954 and other is when they came back which is 7th July 1965.

Kalat 1959

The very first operation, Thall Scouts undertook was in May 1959 when the complete force proceeded to Kalat and remained deployed in Khuzdar and Zehri area, aim was to suppress the hostiles and to facilitate the army in operation against the Kalat State. Three officers, 24 junior commissioned officers and 529 other ranks took part in the operation. From Kalat, the contingent moved to Dir & Bajaur states in September 1960 and it was on 4th March 1961 that contingent came back to Fort Salop which was the home base then; three officers and 400 troops took part in this operation.

Thall Scouts - 1965 War

Fourteen platoons of Thall Scouts active part in the 1965 War mainly in Kotli sector, one company was deployed at Tatta Panni, other at Mara Kot and one more company at Chattar, two valiant sons of Thall Scouts , Lance Naik Rehmat Gul Khattak and Lance Naik Sher Jan Khattak embraced shahadat and other five were wounded. In one of the enemy attack which was successfully repulsed the enemy was forced to leave behind eleven rifles, four sten guns and one wireless set.

After the war, Thall Scouts returned to Thall Fort; in February 1966. Performance in war validated the existing training regime, a new concept of commando platoon was

introduced. Life returned to normal and routine activities started. In 1968, corps won the basketball championship among the junior corps of Frontier Corps at 40th Frontier Corps Week held at Wanna. Sports remained an integral part of Thall Scouts especially the athletics was the main forte, it won the championship in 1961. Firing competition is one trophy for which every corps strives, it was marginally lost by Thall Scouts in 1968 when it stood second but it was able to won the coveted best shot, in the same year it stood second in football also and third in Khud Race.

Few of the pioneering soldiers retired in 1967-69, they included Naib Subedar Mirdil Khan Khattak, Daulat Khan Orakzai, Noor Said Gul Orakzai and Misri Khan Yousafzai, Subedar Mal Akbar Orakzai also bid farewell to arms after a distinguished career spanning over twenty three years in Frontier Corps out of which twenty were spent with Thall Scouts. Number. 398 Niaz Wali Jan Khattak, No. 659 Abdul Janan Khattak, No.650 Noor Khan Kuki Khel were all promoted to the rank of subedar in post 1965 War. Abdul Malik, Timar Shah, Nur Hussain, Baqi Khan, Madat Khan and Awal Khan all Khattak put on the rank of naib subedar along with Ghulam Hussain Yousafzai, Qamar Khel Orakzai and Ghulam Jan Kuki Khel.

Tamgha Khidmat {military} was awarded to Subedar Sabbar Khan and Lance Naik Abdul Ghani in 1967 along with tailor Mohammad Afzal¹¹.

1971 War & Thall Scouts

On 31st March 1971, almost complete Thall Scouts less one company proceeded to former East Pakistan to restore law and order in the province, troops moved by train to Karachi from where they were transported in ship and reached Dacca on 9th April 1971. Their main task was to defend the key installations against the nefarious activities of Mukhti Bhani. They were initially deployed at Rajendurpur ammunition depot, telephone factory at Tungi and weapon factory at Ghazipur. By end May 1971, Thall Scouts were moved out with one company each at Comilla, Sehlat and Chittagong; to establish border posts; in October 1971 the wing was consolidated at Sehlat area where it fought the war collectively. Some pitch battles took place at Maulvi Bazar, Akora Brahman Bari, Shamser Nagar, Zake Gank and Atgram, all in all 33 scouts of Thall Scouts embraced shahadat and further eighteen were missing believe shaheed and 23 were wounded. The events of 1971 War are a sad chapter of our military history, the remaining troops of Thall Scouts also surrendered along with the rest of army and were repatriated to Pakistan in 1973-1974. Thus for all practical purpose the Thall Scouts were non-existent in this period however the unit entity was retained and it remained at Thall Fort with minimum strength of one company.

Kargil 1999

Medium artillery battery of Thall Scouts comprising of four 130 mm guns actively took part in the Kargil conflict, it moved to FCNA on 24th June 1999 and was deployed at

¹¹ Frontier Corps Newsletter, 1968, p-41.

Gultri, its primary task was to supplement the existing artillery firepower; more than 25 shells were fired¹². On 20th April 2000 the battery moved to Muzzaffarabad as the escalation heighten along the eastern borders; it was deployed at Dhanni. 5th May 2000 was a normal day however around noon , Indians shelled heavily in the area which caused injuries to four scouts. It is worth mentioning that a wing of Thall Scouts also remained deployed at Narang Mandi {Punjab}for over four months in relation to the same escalation on eastern borders.

CHAPTER II, 2000-2014

New millennium is always a time marker to start a new dawn of history, when the second millennium started, it was the rise of Mahmood of Ghazna and for next seven hundred years the history of India and that of Kurram Valley was a result of his exploits. Similarly this millennium also brought the similar impact, this time the event took place thousands of miles away at New York and Washington but had its impact in this part of the world most severely. Americans declared war against the Afghanistan or more particularly against the Taliban. From December 2001 the Pakistan-Afghanistan border was sealed. Thall Scouts started the new millennium with high hopes and prayers. Initial deployment was mainly internally, two companies were deployed at Kalaya to maintain law and order in the area which arose due to most unfortunate sectarian vermin which threatened the peace of the valley. One company was also deployed at Kohat to perform the garrison guard and duties after army units were deployed at the sealing of the border. Situation was almost a replica of the era when Russians invaded Afghanistan; flow of refugees started pouring in to Pakistan but the difference was that these refugees need to identify themselves into grey and white category. General elections were held in the country in October 2002, Thall Scouts one wing was deployed at Orakzai Agency for the said purpose. Amidst all this normal routine matters carried on, Thall Scouts won first position in Hifz & Qirat on 7th October 2002. It was in November 2003 when the instructions came to keep an eye and report matters to higher headquarters regarding the construction of bunkers across border, movement of Al - Qaeda elements , interception of messages and actions of afghan national Army{ANA}. On 17th March 2004, the very first flag meeting between Thall scouts and ANA & American representatives was held for over an hour at Koza Village.

South Waziristan Agency

On 11th January 2004, one wing of Thall Scouts {No.2 Wing} move to Wanna to take part in Operation Al-Mizan and in April 2004, the medium battery also moved to join the wing, by the end of the year 2004 both these were redeployed at Dossali and at Laddha; a tactical headquarters was also established at Tiarza{South Waziristan Agency}on 18th January 2005. Azam Kalosha, 16th January 2004, was the very first operation which was undertaken by the wing, it was a baramptta on the house of Nek Muhammad, house was

¹² War Diary, Field Battery, Thall Scouts.

cordoned but before an entry could be made the miscreants opened fire resultantly Lance Naik Muhammad Saleem Yousafzai embraced shahadat and five other scouts were injured apart from a considerable loss of ammunition and equipment including 48 hand grenades. Another similar operation was conducted on 19th March at Shin Warsak {Kalosha II} without any success. Thall Scouts in combination with Mahsud scouts establish 25 check points between Makin- Wanna , No.2 Wing was under command Tactical headquarters Mahsud Scouts {wing had a strength of 314 all ranks}. On 2nd June 2004, wing move to Tiyarza with an aim to establish ROD between Ladha and Makin area. The first major attack from miscreants acme on 16th June 2004 at 0145 hours when Ladha Fort was raided by them and heavy exchange of fire took place, Sepoy Umar Gul Afridi embraced shahadat and seven other scouts of Thall were injured, another similar raid was encountered on 10th September 2004 at Makin but it was repulsed by a platoon of Thall scouts, Laddha Fort again came under attack on the night of ¾ October 2004, Thall Scouts retaliated with 25 pounder guns , no loss to property or life occurred , on the other hand there are reports of miscreants suffering three casualties. By the end of year, wing moved to Kanigram having responsibility to from Sam School to Makin.

On the other hand the recurring internal security irritants remained in vogue, every Muharram had a potential to destabilise the harmony of the area and so were the traditional tribal feud; between 9-17 October 2004, the tribal feud between Babali Shashi Khel & Mirali tribe took four lives and seven other were wounded. In January 2004, Thall Scouts took part in operation against local gangsters at Tajauri in FR Lakki Marwat. Till summer of 2005, the situation remained fairly under control as is obvious from the routine competitions being held at various stations, Thall Scouts stood sixth in inter-unit pioneer platoon event held at Mirali in June 2005.

In July 2005, Frontier Corps was placed under operational control of army, Thall Scouts elements , medium battery and one wing {No.3 Wing} were move to the Miranshah, medium battery comprising of eighty scouts was deployed at Datta Khel, it moved to Miranshah in November 2006. Tactical headquarters of Thall Scouts was re-established at Mirali , it comprised of 41 scouts , it came back to Thall on 20th March 2006. It was at Mirali , during Operation Zara Mela that Commandant Thall Scouts Colonel Raja Tariq Mahmood set a personal example, he led the operation during which he was wounded, having being hit with a bullet which cut through his neck, he brushed aside his wounds and continued the operation in which 26 miscreants were killed, he was awarded with Tamgha-e- Basalat, the very first decoration for Thall scouts since its raising . He was the commander of task force at Mirali which was responsible for operations and road safety in Mirali sector. On 4th March 2006, a convoy was ambushed near Mirali, convoy included elements of Thall and Khyber Rifles, majority of the vehicles were able to break the ambush where as subedar Muhammad Nazakat of Thall scouts carried out anti ambush drills and engaged the miscreants with heavy and light fire, Nazakat intelligently did not allowed the miscreants to break through and by occupying the adjoining height he kept them engaged. Commandant Colonel Tariq rushed from Mirali along with special operation group {SOG} company along with a platoon of Khyber Rifles, Commandant Khyber Rifles Colonel Qaiser who was also part of the convoy briefed Colonel Tariq and both decided to take the miscreants head on , Colonel Tariq with

his troops moved in a anti clockwise direction there by encircling the miscreants and blocking their escape route. He along with Major Hamid Akhtar of SOG and a section strength of troops. As they were stalking, all of a sudden at a distance of twenty meters they encountered a group of miscreants who were hiding behind a small boulder, exchange of fire took place in which a bullet hit Colonel Tariq, but despite bleeding profusely, he refused to withdraw and kept the morale of his troops high, Major Hamid lobbed a grenade on miscreants and after few more minutes which seems like eternity the firing stopped. Colonel Tariq was able to walk for an hour to the road and was later treated at Combined Military Hospital at Thall. In this operation one subedar and seven soldiers of Khyber rifles embraced shahadat.

Year 2006.

In March 2006, Miranshah itself came under attack, field battery of Thall Scouts fired 224 rounds in one night alone. On the other hand the sectarian tension rose to all time high mainly due to infiltration of Taliban in the area. From October 2006, the situation started getting worse and field battery of Thall Scouts was moved to Parachinar, another company was deployed at Kalaya, in December same year, contingents from Swat Scouts and Kurram Militia also joined in to curb this sectarian menace supplemented by mortar battery of Dir Scouts. By and large the overall situation was still being treated as normal and routine inter corps competitions were taking place, inter unit martial dance competition was held at Mohmand Rifles in September 2006 in which Thall Scouts stood third, inter-unit basketball competition was conducted at Kurram in which Thall Scouts secured sixth position and in August 2006, Thall Scouts band was adjudged third in inter-unit band competition held at Fort Salop, 25-26th August 2006. Similarly promotion cadres and courses were conducted as per schedule. 1 Wing Thall Scouts occupied Isha sector in NWA in December 2006 having posts at Isha, Qamar, Thall piquet and Gosh piquet, it was and still is one of the most hard hit sector of NWA, a door way to SWA. In 2006 especially in the second half the incidents of firing by the miscreants on own posts in Thall area started increasing, on 18th August 2006 at 0940 hours miscreants fired small arms on Thall post in retaliation two miscreants namely Sher Zaman and Zain ud Din were killed, majority of such incidences occurred in Spinwam area where No.2 wing was deployed. Improvised Explosive Devices {IED} became a new potential threat to the lives and property, in NWA, Thall Scouts contingent were conducting the Road Operating Days sweep on every such day when military convoys had to use the road, on 15th August 2006, Naik Habibullah Afridi and Sepoy Shaheed Noor Afridi were injured when an IED exploded near Ahmed Khel piquet in Datta Khel area.

On 17 March 2006 at 0145 hours, Sarkai Lara Post of Thall Scouts was attacked by miscreants in Spinwam Sector (North Waziristan Agency). Miscreants launched multi-directional attack on the post with rockets, mortars and small arms. The post fought gallantly till the miscreants withdrew after suffering heavy losses. During the process of engagement miscreants kept creeping forward and launched a physical attack on the post.

No 602559 Sepoy Muhammad Shoaib observing the approaching miscreants jumped out of bunker and got involved into close quarter battle. In the process he got seriously injured, but his brave action resulted into pushing back the miscreants with heavy

casualties. In recognition of his timely action, devotion to duty and valour, Sepoy Muhammad Shoaib is strongly recommended for "**Sitara-i-Basalat**".

2007

In February 2007, on 4th, the Taliban part of Moulvi Siraj group were intercepted at Khapayanga Post being manned by the Thall scouts, Taliban wanted to go across the border but were firmly told to go back, next day another group of them came led by Moulvi Saeed including Molvi Barkat, Sher Wali and Mahboob Ali all residents of Shewa , they wanted to have free access in cross border movement but were firmly denied in this regard; they on the face agreed and returned back at 1230 hours. Only providence knows whether the suicidal attack which was carried out on the vehicle of Thall Scouts on 22nd February at 1045 hours near Khajauri which injured four scouts of No.3 Wing was a reaction to the failed talks between Taliban and Thall Scouts or was it an isolated incident. In March , an operation was conducted in Khapayanga area to demolish two bunkers made of British era, these bunkers had the capacity to accommodate 15-20 men and were reportedly being utilised by the Taliban as a hospital. The border dispute with Afghanistan also resurfaced with afghans claiming the area in Bhatati Post to be their but it was firmly denied by the post commander Havildar Surat Khan, Afghans had arrived at 1745 hours on 30th March, in four vehicles numbering 41 including four officers. Last day of March 2007, saw an unusual action, Kurram river had risen high due to the rain , at 1445 hours, Shewa Post noticed around dozen and half people drowning in flood water, by 1530 hours one Frontier force battalion led by their commanding officer along with 41 soldiers reached the site for rescue operation, an hour later Lieutenant Colonel Nauman, Captain Shoaib Iftikhar along with 40 scouts from Spinwam also reached the site and all affected families were safely rescued , they included nine females, two males and two children, later these persons were dropped by helicopter to safe place. This incident had an electrifying impact on the locals and miscreant's propaganda regarding military as being against the natives was nullified¹³.

By April 2007, new posts were also established in Alizai sector which included Baggan, Gaman Bridge, Chappri and Inzar top. Sectarian tension again flared up in May , most affected area was Baggan {Sunni dominated} and Baghzai{Shia dominating}, use of 12.7 & 14.5mm guns, rockets, mortars continued all night on 9th May, situation became precarious and additional resources including a wing from Tochi Scouts and mortar battery of Dir Scouts were also incorporated. Thall Scouts fired over 30 rounds of 3.7 inch and 36 rounds of 120mm Mortar , mainly to create a deterrence in the area , they were not aimed at any group rather these were fired at open areas.

In July , No.1 Wing relieved No.3 Wing at Miranshah, similarly field firing was conducted by Thall Scouts at Ucha Dara in the mid June 2007; another milestone was the winning of Doli Cup by Thall Scouts para team led by Subedar Major Zarkat Khan. Shortage

¹³ War Diary, Thall Scouts dated 31st March 2007.

of electricity was the cause of locals outcry in June when they took out procession in Thall Bazar on 8th June. Thall Fort came under rocket attack on 27th July 2007 when at 0250 hours, one rocket hit the roof of cook house which was partially damaged, another rocket hit the Spin Pul without causing any damage and similarly another landed at graveyard also without causing any damage, on the same night Spinwam Fort also came under rocket attack; it partially damaged the wall of fort. Resultantly gasht was carried out in the Spin Pul area , at Spinwam a Jirga was held next day in which the locals agreed that in case if any further attack on fort is carried out then they will be held responsible.

In summer of 2007, there were twenty officers on the posted strength of Thall Scouts which apart from commandant, included three lieutenant colonels, six majors and eight captains. The flow of posted in and out continued , in the last quarter of 2007, no less than seven officers were posted out including the commandant and equal number were posted in. Colonel Khizar Asad was the new commandant, he took over the command on 11th August 2007. Thall Scouts in August forward their analysis of the unrest, the keystone was the emphasis on adopting a proactive policy, the tale of Noor Ullah highlights the issue, he was a lad of sixteen years, Afghan by national {Pakhtia province} , who had spent six months in Madrassa Kharwali at Miranshah and another one month at Madrassa Tati Madda Khel at Spinwam, he refused to be a suicide bomber and as such escaped from the seminary on the night of 6/7th August , he was apprehended by at tandi Kats post by Thall Scouts while he was attempting to cross the border; his narration was found to carry weight when the administration of madrassa approached the post to hand them over the boy, they were refused and boy was later sent to Peshawar under a escort. In another related incident, students of Bazid Khel High School , Kalaya, threw stones at tehsil headquarters, they were protesting against the non-availability of teachers in the school.

August 2007, was a hard month for Thall Scouts , within a span of two days , between 18th and 20th August, it was struck twice by the miscreants, in the first incident which took place on 18th August, a suicide bomber exploded his Pajero at Tarkhubi Post in Spinwam Sector, causing the shahadat of Lance Naik Sardar Aslam Swati and two other scouts were injured. On 20th August , Spin pull check post was the target when again a car banged itself into it and resultant explosion took the lives of Naiks Saadullah Yousafzai & Aziz Swati, Lance Naik Waqar Khattak also lost his life in the same blast, four other scouts were seriously injured and twelve were wounded. Thall Scouts always sent a ceremonial burial party comprising of one junior commissioned officer and twelve soldiers with the dead body.

A new wing, No.4 Wing was also raised which had an authorised strength of over 900 men, it relieved the Kurram Militia of posts in Alizai sector in April 2008. It was initially deployed at Tangi Zam Dam Charsada, it later in April 2008 took over five posts from Kurram Militia

September 2007 was relatively calm by previous month standards, only one IED took place which caused major injuries to two scouts and third one received minor injuries, blast occurred at Spinwam sector on 11th. On 22nd October 2007, Bravo Company ex No.4 Wing comprising of 80 troops all ranks left for Swat to take part in Operation Mountain Viper, they

were placed under command Khyber Rifles. Soon after arrival, on 28th, company establish a post at Sanghota, within hours of establishing the post, at 1410 hours, they came under heavy miscreants fire, Lance Naik Bahadur Ali Orakzai and Sepoy Razmat Khan Bangash both embraced shahadat in the duel; Lance Naik Gul Zamin Swati was captured by the miscreants and defying all orders of our Prophet {pbuh} these mad fanatics not only took the life of this prisoner but also cut his throat.

In November, own convoy of No.2 Wing was ambushed near Spinwam at 1600 hours on 6th November, it had seven vehicles, led by Lieutenant Colonel Nauman Khan, it lasted for well over an hour, his vehicle was hit with three bullets. Thall Scouts valiantly fought and compelled the miscreants to flee. It was not only the North Waziristan Agency which was creating trouble, the elements within own agency especially at Kalaya and Alizai were another thorn, IED started taking place in the home vicinity also. Taliban resorted to another dirty tactics of abducting the scouts while on leave and demanding the release of their prisoners in captivity . Sepoy Hazrat Ali Turi was abducted on 22nd December 2007 , while he was on leave.

Years, 2008 – 2009.

Year 2008, was particularly hot for the Alizai Sector, there were firing from the Afghanistan and also from the own territory, main cause was the sectarian issue. It was on 11th August when scouts of No.4 Wing moved to Alizai Sector, on the same night heavy firing started between Inzari and Baghzai villages; it stopped only when two rounds of 130mm were fired by own troops. On 12th August, another duel between the two villages started at Chappri , cause was atta smuggling, atta was a hot commodity then due to high price and it was being smuggled to Afghanistan. Worst carnage took place on 13th August when no less than eight villages were burnt due to sectarian venom between Bilyamina - Monda, soon other villages were also engulfed leaving no other option to the scouts but to retaliate indiscriminately against the miscreants through artillery firing. New posts like Khawaja Baba, Jalami, Ibrahim, Tangi and Chardiwar were established in the first week of September. These posts were being established in both Sunni & Shia areas. By first week of November additional posts were established at Maru Khel, Bilyamina, Ghundial and Munda, standard strength at each post was a section. Situation in Kalaya can be adjudged from the fact that on 5th December, a suicide bomber blew himself in the Kalaya bazar, causing death of six civilians. In the first week of January 2009, gunships were utilised for maintain peace in the Kalaya area, house of Taliban leader Aslam Farooqi and next day house of Rashid were hit. Situation in the area was fast approaching to the conditions prevailing in NWA, on 18th April 2009, a suicide vehicle took the lives of 28 army jawans including two officers at Doaba, and 48 other soldiers were injured. Very next day, own vehicles were ambushed near Alizai Fort, it was the timely intervention of own helicopters which took the initiative away from miscreants. In another incident, Naib Subedar Habib ur Rehman Yousafzai embraced shahadat and seven other scouts were injured when they foiled an ambush on the political agent Kurram who was proceeding to Parachinar with his family on 9th April.

Bajaur, on 2nd November 2008, No.4 Wing under command Lieutenant Colonel Imran Shahzad moved into Bajaur to take part in Operation Sher Dil, wing comprised of 421 all ranks, similarly own troops were participating in Operation Qalb-e- Sher in Shabqadar area. Heavy fighting took place in Juma Killi where Thall Scouts contingent destroyed a Binjo Car on 17th November. At Bajaur, major fighting took place in the first week of January 2009, on 24th January, Thall Scouts expended no less than 1279 rounds of G-3, 460 rounds of machine gun and 33 hand grenades. Wing was at Ghallanai, on 28th January, while carrying out search operation at Karar Markaz near Kandharo, Havildar Fatehullah Bhattani and Naik Nawab Khan Parachimkani embraced shahadat and two more scouts were injured. Wing later carried out operation in Sapari area also which commenced in the first week of April.

The major operation was planned in the June for which an advance party comprising of ten scouts was dropped by helicopter at Nawa Pass border on 10th June and on 11th June, Major Afzal along with 41 troops was heli landed at the at same pass for establishing a post at Mattak. Early next morning at 0420 hours Major Afzal led two platoons and overcoming the terrain, occupied a ridge at Matatk at 0800 hours, there by accomplishing the mission; a link up with a Baluch regiment advancing through Charmang Valley was the logical end. On 18th a reconnaissance was carried out by the wing commander and his second in command, they went as far as Levi piquet overlooking Bari Kamangara Village, after the ground reconnaissance both made a plan for the coming day and decided to carry out the operation in the early hours. On 19th June 2009, the two officers along with a platoon strength were able to reach the edge of the ridge by 1000 hours, and after two hours were in the valley itself. The initial mission was partially achieved however it was on the return segment that the force was ambushed. Sepoy Stana Mir Afridi was injured and when Major Afzal rushed to evacuate him along with Subedar Rahib Ali Bangash, both these officers received fatal wounds and took the last breath on the spot; intensity of fire can be gauged from the number of rounds fired by Thall scouts, 2000 rounds of G-3, 444 rounds of SMG, 3260 rounds of Machine gun and 12 bombs of mortar. Army aviation reached the spot immediately and under its fire dead bodies were retrieved at 1500 hours.

PA – 36188 MAJOR AFZAL AHMAD

4 Wing Thall Scouts left Thall Canlt on 02 November 2008 for Bajaur Agency to participate in Operation Sherdil. 4 Wing Thall Scouts completed its assembly on night 2/3 November 2008 at Khar, Bajaur. Soon after its arrival in Bajaur, 4 Wing Thall Scouts was meshed in the defence of 26 Brigade astride road Khar-Nawagai. Subsequently, 4 Wing Thall Scouts was assigned the task to defend the Tangkhata Sector.

A company ex 4 Wing Thall Scouts was dropped through Helicopter on Pak-Afghan border at Nawapass Post. The company was tasked to advance eastwards for 7 Kilometers and establish a post at Maltak in the first phase. Pakistan Army 36188 Major Afzaai Ahmed landed at Nawapass Post with advance party on 1 I June 2009 and next day, early morning, at about 0420 hours left Navvapass to occupy Matiak. Major Afzaai Ahmed embarked upon a

perilous and precarious route along Durand Line to reach its objective. Major Afzaai Ahmed surprised the miscreants and occupied the Mattak Post soon after sunrise on 12 June 2009. Next one week was very tiring and trying as weather got severe and no worthwhile logistic support could be provided to the troops and Major Afzaai Ahmed. Despite all odds of weather and logistics. Major Afzaai Ahmed kept his men pushing to build and consolidate the defence at Maltak Post. Major Afzaai Ahmed and troops survived for one week with meager logistic under rain and severe weather. It manifested a high degree of devotion, sense of duty and steadfastness. On 17 June 2009 Wing Commander joined Major Afzaai Ahmed at Mattak to accomplish the subsequent task of link up with advancing troops in Charmang Valley.

On 19 June 2009 Major Afzaai Ahmed volunteered to accompany the fighting patrol which was sent out to reconnoiler the area between Matiak and Charmang Valley for eventual link up. Fighting patrol reached its objective and was ambushed on the sight. Fighting patrol disengaged itself and started its movement backward but Hank protection party was stuck up due to intense small arms lire by miscreants. Major Aizaal Ahmed audaciously got through to Hank protection party under heavy volume of lire and extricated them.

Fighting patrol sal its course back to its base but was ambushed again midway. Major Aizaal Ahmed stood up to the challenge and ushered its under command troops to manoeuvre to a safe place. In the meanwhile, Major Afzaal Ahmed got a bullet on his right knee incapacitating him to move. Major Afzaal Ahmed and troops came under heavy small arms and rockets attack from multiple directions. During the First Aid, Major Afzaal Ahmed received another bullet on his head which caused his "Martyrdom".

Pakistan Army 36188 Major Afzaal Ahmed's devotion beyond the call of duty, his selflessness under hardships and gallant action par excellence are an inspiration for the troops of 4 Wing Thal Scouts. His sacrifice is a beacon for all those who were his associates. His courage under lire and resolve under trying condition was commendable and exemplifies his sacrifice.

In recognition of extra ordinary boldness, sense of duty and tremendous courage under lire Pakistan Army 36188 Major Afzaal Ahmed (Shaheed) is strongly recommended for grant of -'Shara-i-Basala.

No.702446 Rank Lance Naik Name Bahadar Ali Orakzai

1. A & B companies of 4wing Thal Scouts were employed in Swat District to establish the writ of the government. The "Op Mtn Viper" was launched against the miscreants to eliminate (Molvi Fazlula group) who were hidden in the area. On 28th

October 2007, B Coy of 4Wing Thall Scouts was ordered by Sector HQ (North) to establish a picket at Sangota ridge.

2. Troops left Fizaghat at 1210 hours under Command of Major Muhammad Akbar Alam Khan ex Khyber Rifles and Captain Muhammad Imran ex Special Operation Group-II (Thall Scouts) to accomplish the task. At about 1400 hours, when the company reached near p^Sangota, they were fired upon by miscreants. Miscreants were holding the positions on the ridge. The Company was trapped into a tactical situation where Swat River was on its left (North) and ridge was on its South and South East. The entire ridge was strongly held by the miscreants. At this moment company commander immediately deployed the company and started approaching towards the hill feature in tactical form. No.702446 Lance Naik Bahadar Ali Orakzai was part of advancing column. Advance was halted due to intense fire from all around. At about 1520 hours, company received the withdrawal orders from Sector Headquarters. At this critical situation, it was extremely difficult to withdraw where miscreants were holding the dominated ground.

Number 3 platoon, under command Captain Muhammad Imran acted as rear guard and started providing cover to company. The platoon commander formed his platoon in three groups and carried out retrograde fighting. The Section Commander, Havildar Manzoor Ali Shah, No.702446 Lance Naik Bahadar Ali Orakzai and No.702563 Sepoy Razmat Khan Bangash displayed commendable fire and move to enable his company to carry out successful withdraw. The section commander, Havildar Manzoor Ali Shah and No.702446 Lance Naik Bahadar Ali Orakzai remained under heavy fire and could not leave the position. Suddenly they were hit by a burst; injuring the section commander and No 702446 Lance Naik Bahadar Ali Orakzai met his creator/ at the spot. He provided an iron shield to his coy to carry-out successful withdraw. No 702446 Lance Naik Bahadar Ali Orakzai had displayed an act of bravery for which he was trained for.

To recognize the act of valour, courage, devotion to duty and exemplary action,

No.702446 Lance Naik Bahadar Ali Orakzai is recommended for "**Tamgha -i- Basalat.**"

NUMBER 702563 SEPOY RAZMAT KHAN BANGASH

During the height of Operation Rah-e-Haq launched to establish writ of the Government in Swat, B Company ex 4 Wing of Thall Scouts was ordered to establish a picquet on the tactically vital Sangota Ridge. However, upon reaching the spot, the company discovered that the miscreants had already occupied the feature in strength and lay in ambush over them. With the ridge on one side and River Swat on the other, the company was left with no route of escape. Unable to help, therefore, the company had to deploy and carry out a tactical withdrawal. To ensure the safe passage for the rest of the company, one of the platoons assumed the role of the rear guard. It was this small force that Sepoy Razmat Khan was a member of. For the company to withdraw safely, the force had to provide cover by fire as well as hold its own in the face of overwhelming miscreant strength. It was at this point that the selfless courage of the sepoy came to the fore and he valiantly sacrificed his life for the safety of his comrades. Through highly effective fire and move tactics, he was able to keep the enemy's heads down and help a major part of the company withdraw safely. During the effort to salvage his company and comrades, a bullet from the miscreants pierced his body and he fell to ground. But before that happened, he had successfully seen his mission through

and the company was able to withdraw unscathed, thanks to the courageous actions of the martyr.

3. To honour the sacrifice tendered by the soldier for the safe withdrawal of his fellow soldiers, voluntary and selfless initiative in the course of comradeship and exemplary courage in precarious situation, Sepoy Razmat Khan is recommended for the award of **Tamgha-i-Basalat**.

NUMBER 700639 SUBEDAR RAHIB ALI BANGASH

4 Wing Thai I Scouts left Thall Cantt on 2 November 2008 for Bajaur Agency to participate in Operation Sherdil. 4 Wing Thall Scouts completed its assembly on night 2/3 November 2008 at Khar, Bajaur. Soon after its arrival in Bajaur, 4 Wing Thall Scouts was meshed in the defence of 26 Brigade astride road Khar-Nawagai. Subsequently, 4 Wing Thall Scouts was assigned the task to defend the Tangkhata Sector.

A company ex 4 Wing Thall Scouts was dropped through Helicopter on Pak-Afghan border at Nawapass Post. The company was tasked to advance eastwards for 7 Kilometers and establish a post at Mattak in the first phase. Number 700639 Subedar Rahib Ali who always took the bull by the horn, opted to accompany the advance party. Subedar Rahib Ali landed at Nawapass Post on 11 June 2009 and without wasting time started preparation for on going operation. Subedar Rahib Ali was up to the call of duty and organizing the manpower and led the troops to occupy the Mattak Post. Subedar Rahib Ali alongwith his troops chose a very difficult route to avoid any ambush and surprise by the miscreants. Subedar Rahib Ali left Nawapass post for Mattak early in the morning at about 0420 hours on 12 June 2009 and was able to occupy Mattak Post just after sunrise. Soon after reaching the Mattak Post, Subedar Rahib Ali started preparing the defence post and its consolidation till late night. Subedar Rahib Ali led his troops through personal example and participated in collection of stones to build the bunkers. Night following occupation of the post, the rain started, which continued for next one week. Therefore, no worthwhile logistic support could be provided through Helicopter on the post. But Subedar Rahib Ali kept the morale of his troops high under perilous conditions.

On 19 June 2009 a fighting patrol was tasked to carry out the reconnaissance of area between Mattak and ridge over looking Charmang Valley.

Once again Subedar Rahib Ali volunteered to accompany the fighting patrol, which manifest the leadership and boldness of Subedar Rahib Ali. Subedar Rahib Ali on reaching the objective started deploying his troops, but was caught by an ambush. Subedar Rahib Ali got even with the situation and steered his troops out of ambush sight. Fighting patrol set its course to its base, but was ambushed again on its way back. Subedar Rahib Ali stood up to the challenge again and was ushering his troops to safe location under heavy small arms and rockets attack. In the process of an evading ambush sight, Subedar Rahib Ali received a bullet which costed him his life.

No. 601400 Hav Fateh Ullah, Bhattani

Thall Scouts Company was deployed in Tehsil Kandaro, Mohmand Agency to fight against terrorists and extremists in Operation Sher Dil. Thall Scouts Company successfully fought against terrorists and destroyed their hideouts and infrastructure with unusual zeal and bravery.

On 28th February 2009, the company was ordered to carry out route picqueting in Tehsil Kandaro for visit of DG ISPR and international media representatives. After conclusion of safe visit, at around 1500 hrs presence of miscreants in village karare was reported to Company Commander Captain Kamran Mehboob who quickly organized the troops in three platoons and started search of the suspected village. As No-1 platoon approached the area it came under intense small arms and mortar fire from miscreants hiding in built up area. In the face of heavy fire, section commander Havr'Idar fateh Ullah was ordered to creep forward with his section. Havildar Fateh Ullah in compliance to call of duty and displaying exceptional bravery kept advancing with his section. As his section neared the built up area, they attracted direct and accurate small arms fire from miscreants hold up in the village. During encounter Havildar hatch Ullah received multiple bullet injuries which could not deter his determination and bravery. He kept moving forward till he embraced Shahadat.

Acknowledging his personnel bravery and exceptional will to accomplish the assigned task, No 601400 Havildar Fateh Ullah is recommended for Tamgha-e-Basalal.

4. The "Martyrdom" of Subedar Rahib Ali is synonym to devotion of highest order and sacrifice. He laid his life in discharge of his duties without carrying for clear and present danger to his life. Subedar Rahib Ali's "Shahadat" has upheld the morale of his under command.
5. In recognition of extra commendable courage, extra ordinary valour and remarkable sense of sacrifice, Number 700639 Subedar Rahib Ali (Shaheed) is strongly recommended for grant of **Tamgha-i-Basalat'**.

24th October 2009 was a sad day for Thall Scouts, while on a routine aerial mission, one helicopter of army Aviation crashed near Surkari Qilla at 1705 hours, only Havildar Manzoor Khattak survived the crash where as Havildar Salar islam Khattak, Lance Naiks, Abid Ullah Khattak, Israr Hussain Bangash , Rab Jamal Mohmand and Sepoy Hasan Khan Mahsud all embraced shahadat , very next day Naib subedar Ajab Khan Bangash, sepoy Niaz Ali Marjan Bangash and Sepoy Wajid Nawaz Bangash also laid their lives for motherland while three other scouts were injured due to heavy exchange of fire with miscreants.

Khawakh Bade Sham was the code name for getting rid of Kurram agency of miscreants, it was launched on 8th December 2009, a platoon strength ex No.3 Wing took part

in it, on 12th December in a major skirmish with insurgents at Tarlai , Sadda, Lance Naik Khial Badshah Afridi and Lance Naik Hamid Hussain Turi embraced shahadat while nine more scouts were injured.

2010 was no different from previous years but situation in majority of the areas was coming under control especially in Swat area. Eleven scouts laid their lives in operations and twenty seven were injured. Two in Swat area, one in Mohmand Agency, two in Bajaur Agency, one in Khyber Agency, four in Orakzai Agency; Lance Naik Rustam Khan Khattak, Sepoys Zahid Ullah Khatatk, Muhammad Said Swati and Samar Saeed Khatatk all embraced shahadat on the night of 11/12th April at Sangrana Post when it came under physical attack from miscreants and one embraced shahadat in Kurram Agency. It clearly highlights the operational commitment of the Thall Scouts, unlike army units which after a tenure of duty in operational area are given a break in a peaceful station like Lahore, Karachi or Okara , the wings of Thall Scouts have no such luxury, they practically for last so many years are in a constant state of war, for them there is no peaceful station as is obvious from the above mentioned casualties.

Thall Fort under Attack

Thall Fort, physically cannot be stormed, however rocket attack is a possibility and it happened at 1745 hours on 12th April 2011, when after the sports as the men and families were looking forward to a peaceful end of the day, all of a sudden the first rocket came and landed inside the fort, not far from the office area, all in all, 13 rockets were fired by the miscreants. Two landed at Thall town where as remaining inside the fort without causing any damage to property or life, 93 windows panes of five living barracks were shattered. It was a new phenomenon as far Thall Fort is concerned but the troops hardened by the deployment at Miranshah were familiar with such attacks. These kind of rocket attacks are mostly carried out by having a timer in recoilless rifles shells which are placed at a distance from the fort, mostly at night; they are fire and forget type of shells. The best defence against such kind of attacks is more vigorous and offensive patrolling of the surroundings. On 15th April, one such individual was seen roaming around the fort, he was chased and cordoned. Sepoy Muhammad Waseem Rafi Khattak was hit by the bullet in the exchange of fire, Rafi despite being wounded did not allow the miscreant to escape, in the end miscreant was shot dead but apart from Rafi, Naik Hakeem Bhittani also embraced shahadat.

Fort again came under atattack on 11th May 2013, when at about 1000 hours miscreants fired four rockets from South-westerly direction, all rockets landed in the surroundings of fort. Another volly of 4 - 6 rockets was launched at about 1210 hours, on Thl Fort. Four of them landed inside the fort without causing any damage.

Pakistan Army-43177 Captain Kaleem Ullah Khan Nasar was performing the duties of Company Commander of Thall Scouts. The company was placed under command 3 Wing Mohmand Rifles in Mohmand Agency. During Operation "Brekhn", his company was tasked to establish a blocking position at Qayum Abad area, Mohmand Agency to check the movement of miscreants. On

night 26/27 January 2011 at about 0130 hours, he moved and successfully established the blocking position at 0430 hours. At first light, miscreants were surprised to see the troops at various heights. At about 1015 hours, Captain Kaleem Ullah took a platoon size force and started climbing a vantage point to monitor the entire area as well as engage the miscreants positions.

Captain Kaleem Ullah was leading his platoon from the front. The moment they reached at the crest of the ridge, he detected an Improvised Explosive Device that was planted by the miscreants in order to inflict casualties on to the forces. The Improvised Explosive Device was effectively defused by his men. After clearing this hurdle, the moment Captain Kaleem Ullah and his platoon advanced ahead, another Improvised Explosive Device was detected. Instead of taking the entire platoon ahead, he deployed them at a safe distance, in order to minimize the hazards of any misfortune and moved ahead to confirm his suspicion. The moment he reached near the suspected place, the Improvised Explosive Device exploded, resulting in amputating his both legs below the knees besides receiving trivial injuries on his arms and hands. Even in that dreadful state, the officer kept his wits intact and shouted at his men to remain away in order to get themselves saved from the splinters of the Improvised Explosive Device. He was seriously injured, but he ensured successful deployment of his company at the most important height. This blocking position ensured the destruction of encircled miscreants during operation and unit successfully completed its mission.

Alizai - June 2011

Miscreants were partially under control, their backbone was broken however isolated acts of terror still took place. Intelligence plays a key role in countering these mad men, field investigation unit {FIU} of Frontier corps are the main bulwark in gathering the data and picking up intelligence , which when seen in broad spectrum guides the future course of action. These FIU men, operates in civilian dress, on 7th June 2011, two FIU men, Naik Kaif Azam and Lance Naik Naheed Badshah Khattak {Thall Scouts} along with three other civilians were ambushed short of Patala Post. In the end both scouts were murdered and all the three civilians were left by the miscreants.

Alizai sector had witnessed the worst gory incident on 17th July 2010, when a Peshawar bound Hiace coach was ambushed near Charkhel, fifteen civilians including six females were killed on the spot while four other received bullet injuries. It was practically becoming a civil war based upon sectarian difference, the difference was always there but level of violence had shot up beyond comprehension in last few years. It is only because of frontier corps relentless efforts and sacrifices that the sense of normalcy is prevailing in the area. People of area have blind trust in the Thall Scouts, case of dispenser Saeed ur Rehman is a classic tale, he was kidnapped by the Taliban on 13th June 2010 and demanded ransom,

he was kept at various places and finally on 19/20th August , he managed to escape and took refuge in the house of his friend Farooq in Village Uchat Killi, his friend hid him in the water tank, later Taliban came and searched the house of Farooq but failed to locate Saeed, later all three Saeed, Farooq and Saeed's wife came to and took refuge in Thall Fort. For these three , there is none to trust other than Thall Scouts. In relation to this event, a search operation was carried out by the Thall scouts at suspected Madrassa Dar Ul Uloom Haqqania Shalgazyaan, another operation was carried out on the residence of Taliban commander Fazal Saeed and seven suspects arrested.

Lance Naik Zia Ullah was detailed at Bizo Sar Post on Pakistan-Afghanistan border, on 14 March 2012 as signal operator, where he performed his duties with utmost zeal and courage. At about 2345 hours, the miscreants attacked the post and tried to cause maximum damage in term of men and material. Owing to miscreants' fire, number 304973 Lance Naik Zia Ullah got a bullet in his left arm and was critically injured. Despite bullet wound, the soldier remained in vicinity of post, maintained contact with his wing Commander and directed artillery fire as observer. Resultantly due to accurate direction of fire by Lance Naik Zia Ullah, miscreant's attack lost impetus and they retreated. Naib Subedar Aurangzeb Khattak was the post commander, he despite being wounded kept the morale of the post and guided his under command, he took his last breath before the arrival of the medical evacuation team; he left behind two sons and two daughters, he was resident of Karak and was the only sibling.

On night 8/9 April 2012, at about 0050 hours, miscreants attacked Khapayanga Post. The post was a complex of three sub post complexes i.e Observation post {OP}-I; manned by six scouts with one mortar, OP-II also had six soldier with one 12.7 mm machine gun and main post which acted as headquarters having fourteen scouts, a total of twenty six scouts which almost amounts to one platoon, Subedar Riaz Swati {No.2 Wing} was the commander. Post immediately informed the headquarters regarding the attack and resultantly artillery fire of 122 MM Gun ex 25 Field Regiment placed at Thall Fort was called on. A Quick Reaction Force {QRF} of platoon strength {22} rushed from Thall Fort to reinforce Khapayanga. The force went on vehicles up to Spin Pull and there on marched; carrying out anti ambush drill up to Ilyas Post .In meanwhile at 0230 hours No. 2 Wing Commander Lieutenant Colonel Saleem along with QRF ex Punjab regiment under Major Qaisar also reached Ilyas Post. Thereon QRFs of Thall Scouts and Army started joint operation and reached OP-I after securing OP-I the force moved to HQ which held its nerves and brave the attack post Comd. From HQ the force moved to OP-II and secured it by 0400 hours. Later search operation for missing men and material was carried out. At 1000 hours, flight of Cobras engaged suspected vehicles. Havildar Usman Din Khattak and **Naik Khyal Hussain Turi** was performing duties at Talokunj Post since 17th June 2012 as a Post 2nd in Command, a cheerful character who kept the morale of everyone high with his simple nature, he was full of utmost zeal and enthusiasm. On 23rd July 2012, a mine blasted due to which Sepoy Javed Khan, Orakzai got severely injured and was lying inside the minefield. Individual was shouting for help. Naik Khyal Hussain, Turi along with **Sepoy Muhammad Alam Afridi** rushed inside the minefield on the path, directed by injured Sepoy Javid Khan and evacuated him from the minefield to the post and further evacuated to CMH Thall.

On 7th January 2013, **Polio drive** commenced from 0900 hours to 1400 hours. Full security was provided to polio eradication team in Thall Scouts area of responsibility. Successful campaign was conducted in projected sensitive area.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| (1) Pastawani | (2) Mandori |
| (3) Shalghazia | (4) Sraghurgai |
| (5) Dhol Ragha | (6) Kher Ullah Mela |
| (7) Baghzai | (8) Tuda China |

6957 Children were vaccinated in Kurram Agency.

Lance Naik Shareen Khan Bhittani embraced shahadat while bravely defending the post.

Bhattai Post. At 0530 hours on 4th April 2013, came under attack from South, SW and Western direction{Afghanistan}. The time was deliberately chosen since scouts were mostly engaged in preparation of prayers and breakfast. The miscreants formed a base of fire in general area Besharamsar & Supply Kandao, they initially engaged the bunkers with fire employing heavy weapons i.e. RPG-7 & mortar. This is the standard pattern of miscreants' attack, in which first the post is engaged with long range weapons from one side and physical attack is launched from other direction followed by physical assault. It is only a matter of holding the nerves and experience comes handy in denying these miscreants their nefarious aims. Similar tactics were employed by the attacker, four of them managed to infiltrate the mine field from South and Western direction, shouting "Vacate the post and you will not be killed". Southern direction was defended by the Post Commander Subedar Muhammad Izhar, Mohmand along with Sepoy Mawali Khan; both of them displayed not only extra courage but also presence of mind, Izhar was able to read the unfolding of events correctly and held his fire till the last and then he opened up with all his weapons. Mortar position at Shabak Post and 3.7 Howitzer along with 12.7 AAMG at Nawab Shaheed Post also provided fire support to the post. 130 mm Gun position at Alizai also engaged the miscreants locations. The attack continued for about one and half hour and realising the futility of the effort in the face of stiff resistance the miscreants withdrew towards Afghanistan, leaving behind four dead bodies (2 x Uzbeks and 1 x Turkaman) . Subedar Muhammad Izhar, received minor injuries on forehead, Sepoy Mawali Khan received minor splinter injuries at legs, back, face and Sepoy Ghulam Awais received minor splinter injuries on head.

Water. Water is the life and in such remote areas it is rare and available at only few places mainly the streams which in majority of the cases are not very far off from the posts , at places water points have been established. at about 0635 hours on 8th May 2013, a scouts party from the post Khona Kandao, near Afghan Border was moving for collection of water from a near by source. An IED was planted on road side in dead ground, resultantly Sepoy Mehmood Khan, Khattak got injured and was critical due to extensive bleeding, he was given first aid at the post and mean while a party was moved from Alizai, under command Lieutenant Mushtaq for an early evacuation. As QRF was moving towards Khona Kandao ,at about 0830 hours, when convoy was almost one Kilometre short of Khona Kandao Post,

another IED exploded on bomb disposal party; Naik Gulzar Hussain, Turi got “Shahadat” in said explosive.

Naik Muhammad Fida Khan & Naik Qamar Sultan (both Khattak and brothers) went for fishing at their own accord on personal car to Ashkalai Nala. There they indulged in a fight with a person identified as Ishaq who was armed with pistol, due to presence of a girl in the car. As a result, Naik Muhammad Fida Khan got shot in the head and was evacuated to Peshawar on helicopter being critically injured, whereas his brother got bullet in right leg. Two days later, Naik Muhammad Fida Khan, expired at CMH Peshawar on 24th September 2013.

Present

Thall Fort is a symbol of state's presence and authority, Thall Scouts have a long way from being just a small corps which was mainly entrusted with the duty of keeping the lines of communication open. It is a front line corps against the militancy. On one end of spectrum are the operations on the other are the standard procedures & drills which includes leave, promotion, training, maintenance, and above all to keep the morale intact and maintain the high standards of discipline and health.

Fort is presently giving a very fresh and bright outlook with green paint, cleanliness is the key word, information room, soldiers mess, JCOs Mess, mosque, living quarters are all bearing testimony to this fact. Soldiers library is being expanded and they are being provided with free tea in the information room, a small gesture but it creates a good feeling among the fighting men. Leave is liberal, so is the ration.

Operations are being still under progress, now all the wings {four} of the Thall Scouts are in the own area of responsibility, on 20th February 2014, a dawn operation was conducted few miles north east of Thall in which aviation combat support was also present. Troops spent three nights in the open but in the end mission was accomplished. At higher echelon, steps have been taken to ensure that no soldier loose his life or limb due to lack of medical facilities, helicopters have been procured fitted with medical facilities for early and prompt evacuation as observed on 23rd February when within an hour the rescue helicopter was at Thall and three casualties were getting the medical treatment at Peshawar before sunset.

Thall Scouts is responsible for part of Lower Kurram (LK) from line joining Kamar Mela, Marokhel and Tauda China in north, from Kamar Mela to Korkamana in the west, along boundary between Kurram and NWA agencies in the south and area east of Road Thall-Parachinar. River Kurram and road Thall – Parachinar divides the area in two distinct sections, each having different contours with respect to threat,

On the west of Road Thall-Parachinar, close proximity with NWA and porous Pakistan – Afghan boundary make the area susceptible to presence of Talibans {Ts or Tango as they are commonly referred as} they infiltrate from NWA for terrorist/ criminal activities. Wide gaps and difficult going provides hiding places to Ts for limited time. Almost all the villages are inhabited by Afghans, they provide support to Ts if not voluntarily then under

coercion. Prominent Tango commanders operating in the area include, Fakhr-e-Alam Mehsud, Siraj Qureshi, Adam Koochi, Muslim Mehsud and Niaz Badin alias Abdullah Mangal. Military after lot of sacrifices now dominates majority of the area west of road although there gaps between posts yet this limitation is overcome through patrolling especially between; Bhatti- Patala and Bhatti- Korkamana.

East of road is occupied mostly by Watizai Tribe. Generally, the tribe is pro government, though harbour strong anti- Shia sentiment, Fazal Saeed (FS) Haqqani, leader of Tehreek- e- Taliban Pakistan Islami TTP(I) enjoys covert support of the tribe, however, there are locals who oppose it as well.

Kurram Valley was once part of Waziristan, unlike Waziristan the core issue is the sectarian differences which since 1948 have been the major cause of unrest, in a way it resembles Ireland. Sunni are the dominating sect having more population, Shia sect on the other hand is scattered in pockets surrounded at most of the places by the opposing sect. Even during the Afghan War of 1979-1989, the sectarian riots used to take place but they were isolated and short in duration, it is the Taliban influence which have added fuel to the fire.

Orakzai Agency was part of Kurram Agency till 1973 when it was raised as a separate agency, it is the smallest agency among all the agencies, its headquarters is located at Hangu and is also divided into upper and lower agency. 85% population of Orakzai Agency is Sunni, Orakzai tribe have eighteen sub clans. Shias who are 15 % of population are mainly settled in lower part of the agency but their location is such that they control the entire movement to Kalaya headquarters from Kohat. Mian Ziarat is the most popular and troublesome shrine in the area, it is named after Mian Anwar Shah Shaheed in village Lerri about two Kilometres from Kalaya Headquarters near the western bank of River Mastura. Ziarat is over two hundred years old and claimed by Saidan Orakzai {Shia sect of Orakzai} as being of their great grandfather, Sunni sect of Orakzai do not agree with this claim of their fellow tribesmen and this is the major cause of many a blood feuds. In 1920 , a major fight arose over the ziarat, Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Sheikh Mahboob Ali Khan was able to reach a peace agreement with both warring clans under which the control of the western bank of Mastura river was given to the Sunni sect with Shia being allowed a free access to the shrine. In 1999 tension arose over the maintenance and construction of the same shrine, Thal Scouts were deployed to ease the tension and for well over a year they remained deployed at the site. Now Taliban are exploiting the situation and Shia are not allowed to visit the shrine thus a permanent bone of contention exists in the area.

Hangu is another hot spot, 25% of population is Shia but again the main approach to the city from Kohat i.e between Chikarkotbala – Ibrahimzai is under their control, on the other hand the rest of the approach is under Sunni domination, and they also dominate Hangu-Parachinar segment of the road as well, all the adjoining tribes are also Sunni. Sectarian clashes broke out in March 2001 also which lasted for quite some time and wing of Thal Scouts was deployed at Hangu for almost whole year {March-September}

Honours & Awards

1. **Tamgha-e- Basalat**

(1)	PA-21291	Colonel	Raja Tariq Mehmood
(2)	PA-36188	Major	Afzal Ahmed
(3)	702446	Lance Naik	Bahadar Ali
(4)	702563	“	Razmat Khan
(5)	602559	Sepoy	Muhammad Shoaib
(6)	700639	Subedar	Rahib Ali
(7)	600861	N/Subedar	Habib Ur Rehman
(8)	601400	Havildar	Fateh Ullah
(9)	PA-43177	Captain	Kaleem Ullah Khan Nasir

2. **Imtiaz Sanad**

(1)	PA-31980	Major	Abdul Manan
(2)	PA-31188	“	Shehryar Pervez Butt
(3)	600421	Subedar Suleman Sher	
(4)	600637	“	Muhammad Nazakat

3. **Tamgha – I- Imtiaz (Milatary)**

(1)	PA-21094	Lt Col	Wajahat Imam
-----	----------	--------	--------------

4. **Sitara – I- Imtiaz (Milatary)**

(1)	13413	Col	Mushtaq Hussain
-----	-------	-----	-----------------

5. **COAS Commendation Card**

(1)	PA-42272	Captain	Mubashir Khurshid Khan
(2)	PSS-8701	Captain	Muhammad Sarfaraz
(3)	PSS-28621	“	Muhammad Sharif
(4)	244140 SM		Taimoor Khan
(5)	6000148	Subedar Malak Shah	
(6)	600067	“	Raheed Khan

6 **IGFC Commendation Card**

(1)	600388	Sub	Mir Nawab
(2)	601324	Hav	Khalid Iqbal
(3)	601419	“	Amir Zeb
(4)	601631	Nk	Manzoor Ahmed
(5)	601931	Lnk	Nazifur Rehman

7. **Tamgha-e-Khidmat**

(1)	601610	Nk	Widan Shah
-----	--------	----	------------

8. **TK Mil – I**

(1)	600615	SM	Shoukat Ali
-----	--------	----	-------------

	(2)	600740	Sub	Asar Khan
9.	<u>TK Mil – II</u>			
	(1)	600713	SM	Balqeyas
10.	<u>TK Mil – III</u>			
	(1)	451	Swp	Anwer Masih
	(2)	2150	W/C	Mir Muhammad
	(3)	-	“	Muhammad Rafiq
	(4)	-	Tailor	Shoukat Rehman
	(5)	371	Swp	Ishfaq Masih
	(6)	401	Carpenter	Rab Shahzad
	(7)	80072	Hav	Aman Gul
	(8)	102321	“	Muhammad Nabi
	(9)	-	W/C	Rizwan Ali

Wings of Thall Scouts

Till 1989 the wings were organised in a numerical pattern in all the Frontier Corps, thus No.21, 22 & 23 Wings were part of the Thall Scouts, later these were known as No.1,2, 3 & 4 Wings respectively.

Unit badge is an Eagle, the very first emblem was also an eagle but it had too much similarity with the Nazi eagle, as the story goes, in 1951 an American officer was visiting the unit and present day crest is mainly attributed to the cap which he gave as a souvenir to the unit then. Old badge is still visible on the mess dining chairs. The motto Pasdaran was also adopted in 1989 after the up gradation to three wings strengths.